

What do you mean “college”

We know you are interested in going to college. Today, college probably seems like it is a long way off. But, in just a couple of years, you will begin to think about particular colleges that you might want to attend. In the end, picking ONE college out of hundreds requires lots of thought and research. Here are some ways to begin thinking about your college options:

PART I: It is important to remember that you want to pick a college that is RIGHT FOR YOU! YOU will be sitting in the college classroom—not your parents or your best friend. You will want to seek lots of advice along the way, especially from teachers or counselors who know colleges well. But, in the end, no one can tell you where you’ll be happy. So start by asking yourself questions about how you feel about school right now, like:

1. How do I learn best? In large classes or small groups?
2. Do I like being one of the best in a class, or do I need the competition of other equally bright classmates in order to challenge myself?
3. Do I learn more quickly when structure is clear and uniform, or does freedom to make choices about how I spend my time for a class fit me better?
4. What extracurricular activities have been most important to me? Which will I want to continue in college?
5. What have I learned about my academic interests and abilities that influence what I may study in college?
6. Who are my friends? Do I want my relationships in college to be similar or different?

Answers to these questions will help you apply what you have already learned about yourself as you think about college possibilities.

PART II:

INCLUDE YOUR FAMILY: Now is a good time to start talking with your family about college.

Are they ready to support you as you plan for college?

Are there colleges that they hope you will consider?

Are they comfortable with allowing you to travel a great distance for college?

Are there limits to what they can or will contribute to your college finances?

If you and your parents are on the same page—great! If not, this might be a good time to share what you are learning in these workshops—or to ask your family to talk with the leader of these workshops to learn more about the advantages and range of colleges. If they are worried about paying for college, your workshop leader can help them understand the financial aid process.

WORK ON YOUR COLLEGE VOCABULARY:

COLLEGE TYPES: While no two are exactly alike, most fit into one or more of the following categories: **Liberal Arts Colleges** focus on the education of undergraduate students. Classes are generally taught

by professors who see teaching as their primary responsibility. Students who attend liberal arts colleges are exposed to a broad sampling of classes. In addition, they select at least one area of in-depth study that is their college “major.” Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs, because they are “well-rounded.”

Universities are generally larger and include a liberal arts college, as well as colleges focused on preparation for a specific career, like nursing or education. Universities offer a greater range of academic choices than do liberal arts colleges, but often come with classes that are quite large.

Technical Institutes and Professional Schools enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they want to study and emphasize preparation for specific careers, for example in music or fine arts, engineering or technical sciences. You will want to be quite sure of your future direction before selecting one of these options.

Hispanic-serving Institutions are colleges, universities or systems/districts where total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25 percent at either the undergraduate or graduate level.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities find their origins in the time when African-American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at HBCU’s have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community as the majority. They find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

Tribal Colleges are similar to HBCU’s, in focusing on the needs and education of American Indian students.

Women’s Colleges, with their larger numbers of female faculty and administrators, offer college women confidence-building role models, greater opportunities to serve in a full range of student leadership positions, and a heightened awareness of career possibilities for women. Women’s colleges graduate a high number of science majors, as well as students who continue on to graduate school and/or professional studies.

Community or junior colleges generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education, in addition to specialized occupational preparation. An associate degree is awarded at the end of a two-year program of studies, following which many students continue their education at a four-year institution.

Proprietary institutions are considered for-profit companies that operate under the demands of investors and stockholders. They attract adult learners and part-time students in search of narrowly -focused professional training opportunities. These programs usually offer a non-traditional format; many for-profits also have classes solely available online.

OTHER COLLEGE TERMS YOU’LL WANT TO KNOW:

Public colleges and universities are financed by state taxes. Their primary mission is often to serve students who live where you do. Generally, they cost less than private colleges.

Private colleges and universities are not supported by states or taxes. Some receive support from

religious groups or other endowments.

Financial aid comes in many forms and helps students with need pay for college costs. Financial aid includes:

- grants: money given to students based upon family income s
- scholarships: awards based upon school performance, test scores, or special talents (like sports or music).

Undergraduate degrees include: a two-year associate degree (earned at a community college or two-year private college) and a bachelor's degree (completed at a four-year institution).